

APPLYING DISCOURSE THEORY IN THE CURRENT UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIAL WORK

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Abstract:

The aim of the contribution is to draw attention to the understanding of the discourse and its applicability in practice. The application of discourse as a discussion is used in social work as part of an interview in qualitative research, which leads to the connection of theory and practice, where processes, procedures and rules must be preserved.

Keywords: Discussion. Paradigm. Knowledge. Education. Attitudes. Social work. Reflection.

Introduction

Social workers approach theories with respect, but they do not consider their applicability in practice. The opinion of incomprehensibility, lack of identification with social work theories, often does not change even among social work graduates after graduation. Elusiveness, lack of identification, has been shown to be one of the factors of non-use of social work theories in common practice. The debate on the use of theories is not only conducted at the academic and publishing level, but also in the practice of social workers (Akimjak, 2017, s. 29-48, In. Akimjak, 2003).

We translate the term discourse from the English dictionary as discussion,

speech or debate, from the French discourse as speech. The term discourse can therefore be understood as a conversation, discussion, or talk about a topic.

In the general understanding, this term was already known by the Sophists, ancient Greek teachers and philosophers in the 5th and 4th centuries BC. I. The term was further expanded thanks to the masterpiece Discourse on Method, authored by René Descartes. Discourse as a term used in modern times was only introduced within the framework of linguistics, because in the 19th and 20th centuries there was a shift in linguistics from the lowest language units to higher ones. Gradually, the opinion was promoted that a sentence is not enough for a sufficient investigation, but the whole text should become it (Anzenbacher, 2015).

A condition for the integrability of a literary work is to undergo a selection process that organizes it into a meaningful form. The opacity of a literary work or development is subsequently subjected to the process of the coherence of a coherent story. These processes maintain regularity, repetitive procedures, follow binding standards (Biblia, 2018).

The need to examine the context of individual expressions is a justification for the entry of discourse into linguistics, because each linguistic unit acquires meaning within a certain text. Not only linguists, but also prominent philosophers have advocated for the development of the understanding of discourse, who, thanks to their efforts to examine language in the context of its social existence, have contributed to the expansion of the discursive approach in the social sciences (Benedikt XVI, 2006).

Criticism is characterized by a high degree of reflection of norms, which points out the limits of the discourse by exposing its contested foundations. Criticism can never become an integral part of discourse because it is in opposition to its definitions (Akimjak, 2012, p.288).

Social discourse

Social discourse is built on rules that are specific to a particular society and a particular situation. In order to be able to understand the social discourse, it is necessary to have knowledge not only about a specific society, but also about its rules (Fairclough, 1992).

Social identity can be defined primarily in the field of psychology in connection with psychoanalysis, symbolic interactionism, social identity theory and intergroup relations, but also social constructionism, etc (Bursová, 2018, s.37-56).

Personal identity is characterized by several characteristics of a person, while social identity is the inclusion of a person in a certain group, which can be "citizen", "employee", etc. At the same time, the theory of social identity assumes that a large part of people's self-concept, or what they are and what their value is, is derived precisely from their affiliation. In fact, a positive self-concept is then more preferred than a negative one. This is why it is also assumed that they will have a more positive view of their own group compared to another.

Within the framework of social identity theory, it is therefore about maintaining a high group self-esteem or a positive social identity. Language is an important criterion of the aforementioned comparison. The dynamic relationship between social identity and language is then addressed by the ethnolinguistic theory of identity (Bursová, Janus, 2021, p.71-79).

Social identity can be further described within social constructivism as a typification that occurs in interaction with unfamiliar partners. If trust grows, then this typification disappears. Therefore, in a way, social identity is a set of attributes that people in interaction assign to a specific individual (Foucault, 1994, In. Foucault, 2016).

Social constructivism views discourse not as reflection or mapping, but as an artifact of social exchange. It is based on the belief that there is no clear objective description of reality. In this context, the social construction of reality can be pointed out, while subjective and objective reality can be considered as socially constructed realities. The relationship between these two facts is resolved by dialectics. In today's society, the understanding of knowledge is also changing (Disman, 2008).

Personality is very important as well as a factor in the learning process itself. (Czarkowski, Bursová, Dolinská, Šimek, Porubčanová, 2023).

Equally important is self-efficacy in overall preparation and understanding. (Duda, Králová, Porubčanová, Bursová, 2022).

It is becoming more and more clear that we are probably not enough with the above-mentioned Platonic understanding. We are convinced of this by many scientific fields that describe and use phenomena whose existence we cannot prove with the help of direct logical proof, for example quantum physics. Also, the direct relationship of cause and effect forming the basis of logical proof is insufficient for the description of the complex world.

According to Fairclough, the concept of discourse is based on the three-dimensional theory of discursive analysis – discourse is a complex of three elements (discursive and social practice and text) (Fairclough, 1992).

Analytical apparatus therefore represents description, interpretation and explanation (Schneiderová, 2015).

Fairclough attempts to bring together three traditional analytical procedures that are essential for discursive analysis. Fairclough bases the concept of discourse on the three-dimensional theory of discourse analysis. Discourse and any instance of discursive practice is simultaneously seen as a linguistic text, a discursive practice (including textual production and interpretation) and a social practice. Discursive analysis includes the linguistic description of the text, the interpretation of the discursive practice and the explanation of the analysis of the social practice. A special role is played by the connection of sociocultural practice with the text, which is mediated by discursive practice - how the text is created and interpreted. The goal is to find out the relationships between language use and social practice (Fairclough, 1992).

According to Fairclough, textual analysis (description) consists of vocabulary, grammar, cohesion and text structure. These elements can accelerate to varying degrees. Vocabulary cooperates with words, grammar combines words into sentences and sentences, cohesion deals with the mutual connection of sentences and sentences, text structure, on the other hand, works with the organizational properties of the text. Fairclough considers the power of the statement, the coherence of the text and intertextuality to be important within the analysis of the text. Together, these seven elements (vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, text structure, sentence force, text coherence and intertextuality) form the constitutive framework for text analysis, including production and interpretation (Fairclough, 1992).

Discursive practice is a process involving textual production, distribution and consumption. The process may vary depending on different social factors (Martinek, 2008).

Changing the order of discourse can have a significant contribution to current debates in the field of social change. The clarification of social practice takes place through the analysis of discourse and discursive practice. For discursive practice, it is necessary to notice whether the rules of discourse are used, or whether the discursive practice participates in social change. We should also consider whether power relations in society are not being strengthened (Fairclough, 1992).

Theory of social work

In the modern understanding of this discipline, social work is considered a necessary and scientifically based field. It is a discipline that provides professional human care through social work methods. Social work is a set of activities that affect a person and his family in order to preserve the integrity of a person, his relationship to society, but also to education and work (Matoušek, 2013).

Currently, there are also various difficulties and situations in the field of upbringing and education (Gawrych, 2010).

We consider not only education but also the motivation to learn to be important (Gawrych, 2022).

The modern understanding of social work is therefore based on the application of scientific knowledge to practical activities, because social work is based on a comprehensive system of theoretical knowledge. Social work can be better defined in a narrower and broader sense. In a narrower sense, social work represents a direct interaction that takes place between a social worker and a client (that is, an individual, a group and a community). The goal of this interaction is social care. In a broader sense, social work can be defined as the provision of social care services and benefits, ensuring their organization and purposeful use in cooperation with other professionals (Opatrný, 2013).

During the 20th century, three different approaches were refined in social work, which (Payne, 1997, p.354) refers to as small paradigms, because according to his assumption, social work does not have a large paradigm that would unite theoretical, research and practical procedures into a coherent whole.

According to Payne, at that time the National Association of Social Workers in the USA worked with the following definition, "Social work is a professional activity aimed at improving or restoring the social functioning of the client and at creating social conditions favorable to this goal." The concept of social functioning is a holistic concept that combines the dimension of the client's living situation and the requirements of the social environment. Clients and their environment are therefore in direct interaction and thus must react in life to the environment in which they live. If the client is unable to deal with these requirements, a social worker steps in to provide him with social assistance. So social workers help clients to function better socially.

The theory of social work is the source of the professional identity of social workers. It is about the so-called the "conceptual equipment" of the social worker, because the use of theories facilitates the ordinary practice of the social worker. The theory of social work is inseparable from the practice of a social worker

(Payne, 1997).

Theories of social work are mostly based on other scientific disciplines and mostly did not originate directly within social work as a field except for example a task-oriented approach. The theoretical equipment of social work is therefore primarily based on supporting subjects such as sociology, psychology, pedagogy and law. The specificity of the use of theories lies in their adaptability to solving specific problems of clients. The theories of social work are being completed in both theoretical and practical directions and thus enable a comprehensive view of the human being (Kompendum, 2008).

The theories, models and perspectives with which social workers work are referred to as a conceptual system, although the meaning of these terms is different, "they are often mixed up and referred to as theory". In their classifications, individual authors are therefore concerned with clarifying these concepts and placing them in the position of theoretical concepts of social work (Kompendum, 2008).

During the 20th century, as part of the development stage of the classification and typology of theories in the 1980s-1990s, the phase of the conceptual apparatus led through the consideration that the theory of social work does not need to be linked at the level of concepts, but that their systematic arrangement according to key characteristics is sufficient, therefore in social work, they refined three different approaches, which (Payne, 1997), refers to as small paradigms.

Three perspectives on social work (therapeutic, counseling and reform paradigms) can be used in parallel. They often reflect political-philosophical attitudes rather than just knowledge paradigms:

- Therapeutic paradigm (reflexive therapeutic model)
- Counseling paradigm (individualist-reform perspective)
- Reform paradigm (socialist-collectivist view) (Výrost, 2008).

In a general view, it shows three groups of theories with different views of social work. In the therapeutic paradigm, social work deals with the direction of personal development and satisfaction with an emphasis on emotions and interpersonal satisfaction. The reform paradigm represents ideas within social work that are aimed at social change. The counseling paradigm column deals with social work ideas that focus on the social and political demands of others (Kliment, 2013).

Conclusion

Content analysis found that in the context of social work theories, the themes of direct work with the client, individual counseling, work with family and community, and community work are those that influence the current discourse of contemporary social work in several areas. It is possible to talk about the mentioned legal discourse, psychological discourse, spirituality discourse, ethical discourse and moral discourse.

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